ERITREAN NATIONAL LIBERATION

The following analysis has been contributed by ERITREANS FOR LIBERATION. Readers desiring additional information on the struggle of the Eritrean people may write to: EFL, P.O. Box 1247, N.Y., N.Y., 10027 or to: EFL. P.O. Box 163, Boston, Massachusetts, 02138.

Imperialist America, Zionist Israel and feudalist Ethiopiaare collaborating in the oppression of the Eritrean people who, for the last twelve years, have been engaging in armed struggle against these collaborating oppressive forces to gain their national liberation. Although facing such a colossus of aggressive forces, the heroic Eritrean people, under the leadership of the Eritrean Liberation Front, succeeded in liberating two thirds of their country.

The Eritrean people have suffered under a succession of foreign oppressors since 1890. With the collaboration of the British and the helping hand of emperor Menelik of Ethiopia, then King of Shoa, Italy colonized Eritrea in 1890 and the Eritrean people suffered colonial oppression similar to that of their brothers and sisters in colonized Africa and the rest of the Third World. At the height of World War II, the British defeated the Italians in Eritrea with Eritrean manpower. Although they had claimed that their interest was to defeat the Italians as part of their allied war effort and not to take over Eritrea, they betrayed the Eritrean people and occupied Eritrea as a colony until 1952.

The conspiratorial imperialist design of the United States, Ethipia and Israel started in 1952 when the United Nations, under the domination of the United States, decreed to make Eritrea an autonomous state to be federated with the feudalist empire of Ethiopia. The United Nations had further decreed that the head of the Ethio-Eritrean federal state would be emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia Without their participation and consent therefore, the Eritrean people were forced to come under the dictatorship of the feudal chief of Ethiopia in the name of a bogus federation. Haile Selassie had his expressed designs to take over Eritrea in order to gain access to the sea and control its rich mineral and oil wealth.

The United States, which master-minded the federal resolution, also had its imperialistic designs in Eritrea. Because of its strategic geographic location, the United States viewed Eritrea as a base for its military operations in Africa, the Middle East, the Indian Ocean and Eastern Asia. Furthermore, the United States had a firm interest to exploit the rich phosphate, copper, iron and oil deposits in Eritrea. With the "federal government" firmly under Haile Selassie's control, the United States then proceeded to establish itself militarily in Eritrea. This was easily accomplished in 1953 through an agreement with Haile Selassie allowing it to build military bases in the Eritrean towns of Asmara, Gura, Massawa and Keren. It further received unlimited concessions to exploit the mineral deposits of the country through treacherous economic treaties with the monarch.

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Similarly, Israel had vital military and economic interests in Eritrea. Here again, Eritrea's strategic geographic location attracted Zionist attention for it provided an ideal base for Israel' s imperialist war against the Arab world and its attempt to control the entrance to the Red Sea (the strait of Bab el Mandeb). Its immediate economic interest was in assuring the continuous inflow of food products, especially meat, of which it was desperately deficient. In 1952, Israel set its initial economic foot in Eritrea by securing a franchise from Haile Selassie to establish the INCODE meat packing monopoly in Asmara. Further, it established its military grip, under the umbrella of the United States, by signing an agreement with Haile Selassie allowing it the use of Eritrean teritory for "emergency military operations".

The economic and political bases for the collaboration of the three imperialistic forces in the oppression of the Eritrean people were thus deep rooted and well set. The total liberation of Eritrea would mean not only an end to their imperialistic interests in Eritrea but would also represent a serious blow to their overall military and economic strategy in Africa and Asia. Thus,in order to fully subjugate the Eritrean people and bring them under their direct control, the three imperialistic aggressors decided from the outset to fully collaborate rather than compete in Eritrea. With such a design therefore, Haile Selassie's army invaded Eritrea in a series of military moves premeditated to avoid world attention, and fully occupied the country by 1960. The meagre economic and political liberties that existed within the framework of the United Nations-mandated "autonomy" were similarly choked by slow degrees until in 1962, Haile Selassie finally "announced" his full annexation of Eritrea into his empire as a province.

The Eritrean people initially protested such a slow process of economic and political strangulation through peaceful means. They continually presented their case to the United Nations, since it was this body that decreed, though without their participation, the autonomous and federal status of Eritrea. But they soon realized that it was the very country that proposed the "Federal Resolution" that was the main force behind their oppression and the the United Nations was only a legitimizing instrument. Furthermore, the Eritrean people tried to resist Haile Selassie's moves to overrun their country and suppress their economic development through peaceful public demonstrations, but they soon learned through bitter experience that Haile Selassie and his imperialistic sponsors only tightened their reins of control. In 1958, Eritrean workers throughout the country staged a massive demonstration that paralyzed the foreign controlled economy for four days, and Haile Selassie, with the advice and operational guidance of his masters, ordered its suppression by force of arms. This brutal act led to the massacre of more than 550 Eritrean workers. This barbaric massacre of defenseless workers clearly spelled to the Eritrean people that the only way to combat such brute violence and gain their complete national liberation was through armed force, They thus began an urban guerilla movement in the same year, and in September of 1961, started a full scale armed insurrection in the Eritrean countryside against the collaborating oppressors.

The Eritrean people's national liberation struggle soon encompassed the entire countryside. By 1965 the number of liberation fighters rose to about ten thousand, and by 1967, the whole Western plains of Barka and Senhit and the northern plateaus of Sahil were fully liberated. Operating from bases inside their liberated land, Eritrean liberation fighters gained increasing victories against the occupation forces of the enemy. In 1968, the leadership of the struggle passed fully into the hands of liberation fighters within the field; further, the struggle reached a higher stage of ideological development. Its objective became not only to gain Eritrean national liberation from imperialist domination, but also to bring about a socialist transformation of Eritrean society within a Pan-African framework. This positive development, the widening progressive international support for the Eritrean liberation struggle, and the increasing victories of the Eritrean liberation fighters shook the puppet emper- and his masters who had continuously tried to is late the struggle from the world public and to d tort its just revolutionary cause. In 1970, th frenzied monarch declared a state of emergency Eritrea and placed it under direct military rule

While the gallant liberation fighters were gaini military victories over the enemy on the ground, however, the enemy committed the most inhuman cr over the Eritrean people by bombing and napalmir entire villages and communities and razing then down to ashes. More than 120 villages have beer totally destroyed and their inhabitants and live stock completely wiped out. Defoliants have be indiscriminately sprayed over entire regions. Throughout the country, the enemy has herded pe into concentration camps and then dropped bombs them. It was in such a fashion that the enemy med more than 1,000 people in one afternoon in city of Keren in 1970.

As a result of the enemy's genocidal bombing campaigns against Eritrean peasants, around 100,000 old men, women and children have been forced to flee to the Sudan and are living in deplorable refugee camps. The "Libyan Times" of May 28, 1971, reported the condition of these refugees:"A report,written after an extensive 1,700 kms. trip inside war-torn Eritrea by al-Hakika correspondent Mohamed Ahmed Werayeth, depicted the misery into which 97,000 refugees have been subjected to because of Ethiopia's cruel means that forced them to flee their own homes inside their own country. Eritrean refugees, now living in primitive bamboo-sustained tents in Marafit and Gadaref in Eastern Sudan, are dying en masse at the average of 30 persons per day from hunger, disease and bad shelter." It is this inhumanity that Haile Selassie and his masters have continuously tried to hide from the world public for fear of exposing their crimes and basic designs and facing widespread international condemnation.

However, the increasing victories of the Eritrean Liberation fighters and the collaborating aggressors subsequent savage reprisals on the defenseless civilian population have attracted world attention and exposed the nature of the imperialist, Zionist and feudalist alliance. The barbaric atrocities that this imperialist alliance has committed and is still committing on the Eritrean people in hopes of silencing them shows the extent of its desperation. The oppressive collaborators are painfully aware of the long-run inevitability of their defeat; so are the Eritrean people fully aware that final victory is theirs.

It should be recognized, however, that because of the depth of their imperialistic interests and their growing desperation, the collaborating fascists could very well continue to intensify their genocidal acts and turn Eritrea into an African Vietnam before their final defeat. To prevent such a possibility, the progressive world should fully understand the designs, involvements, and crimes of these imperialistic allies and come to the support of the heroic Eritrean people in their just struggle for national liberation.

GUNBOAT DIPLOMACY FOR HIS FRIENDS

The Wall Street Journal is being a little blunter than usual these days. In an article on political repercussions of the "energy crisis," (January 30, 1973), it prepares readers for a possible show of force in the Middle East in this way:

"Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, the navy boss, already sees a budget opening through which he hopes to pilot a fleet of shiny new destroyers. Claiming the U.S. will need a thousand large civilian tankers by 1980, he concludes 'their safe passage will depend in large measure on our ability to deter interruptions of this flow.'"

The article goes on to report that Zumwalt sees the destroyer fleet as an instrument of diplomacy. He is quoted as saying "To the citizen of a less technologically oriented society, nothing is quite like a shin-shape destroyer making a call."